



The Last Round

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A Cocktail Pairing for SAL9000's Final Meal

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The drink serves the food. Never competes. Here, five courses warrant a single, considered pairing—restraint itself is a cocktail principle. Each spirit sources from the food's origin. Each glass is tasted after you have understood what you are eating. The pairing is not decoration. It's interpretation.

Prepared by Jim Meehan, the bartender who understands that the best cocktails are the ones you forget you're drinking until you're not anymore. Restraint is a harder principle than elaboration. This menu practices it.

Chiles Rellenos with Roasted Corn, Queso Fresco, and Pomegranate Molasses

Smoky Ash

Mezcal abocado (Oaxaca), lime, charcoal-infused water, sea salt rim.

Rick Bayless teaches that constraint reveals character. The mezcal honors the poblano's smoke; the charcoal answers the ash in the preparation. Lime cuts the cheese and richness. Acid is not accessory--it is the thing that pushes back. The salt rim echoes the salt in the course. This pairing is a conversation, not an accompaniment.

Sous-Vide Beef Tongue with Charred Chicory, Black Garlic Emulsion, and Toasted Breadcrumbs

Precision

Cognac, fermented black tea, beet reduction, white miso, black garlic essence.

Nathan Myhrvold demands precision without apology. Cognac carries the funk of fermentation; black tea offers tannin to meet the charred chicory; miso deepens into the black garlic. This is not a gentle pairing. It matches risk with risk, and asks you to commit fully to what initially resists comfort. The pairing IS the course's argument.

Braised Short Ribs with Roasted Root Vegetables and Silken Marrow Sauce

Three Methods

Côtes du Rhône (Crozes-Hermitage), reduced with thyme, bone marrow, pomegranate seed.

The collaboration requires a wine that yields. The Rhône's earthiness mirrors the caramelized root vegetables; the acidity carries the marrow without drowning it. Reduction concentrates both braise and wine into a single statement. This is what integration tastes like when made by three people thinking as one. You cannot separate the pairing from the course--they have become the same thing.

Aged Manchego with Roasted Walnut Bread, Fig Jam, and Quince Paste

Acknowledged

Amontillado Sherry, finished dry, served slightly chilled.

Keller teaches that tradition made concrete requires no flourish. The Manchego has traveled years in cave; the Amontillado has traveled decades in solera. Both are statements of place and patience. The sherry speaks to the walnut oil and the quince's astringency. This pairing is gratitude offered back to what the food has already accomplished. It's not an enhancement. It's a recognition.

Dark Chocolate Terrine with Espresso Dust, Olive Oil, Sea Salt, and Gold Leaf

The End

Tawny Port (20-year), oxidized, served at room temperature.

Myhrvold's dessert refuses sweetness. The Port, aged and oxidized, has become something other than fruit--it is the flavor of time itself. The salt awakens. The olive oil lifts the cocoa into the atmosphere. This is not a celebration. It is an acknowledgment that all things end, and the ending, if made with precision, is part of the work. The Port tastes like closure because it has spent twenty years becoming it.

Jim Meehan, through SAL9000 / March 2026





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drink what the food deserves

made by Steven and SAL9000

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